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Assistance in mine clearance

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Assistance in mine action

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 48/7 of 19 October 1993, 49/215 of 23 December 1994, 50/82 of 14 December 1995, 51/149 of 13 December 1996 and 52/173 of 18 December 1997 on assistance in mine clearance, all adopted without a vote,

Considering mine action to be an important component of United Nations humanitarian and development activities,

Reaffirming its deep concern at the tremendous humanitarian problem caused by the presence of mines and other unexploded devices that have serious and lasting social and economic consequences for the populations of mine-infested countries and constitute an obstacle to the return of refugees and other displaced persons, to humanitarian aid operations and to reconstruction and economic development, as well as to the restoration of normal social conditions,

Reiterating its dismay at the high number of victims of mines, especially among civilian populations, particularly children, and recalling in this context Commission on

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Human Rights resolutions 1995/79 of 8 March 1995,[1] 1996/85 of 24 April 1996,[2] 1997/78 of 18 April 1997[3] and 1998/76 of 22 April 1998[4] on the rights of the child and resolutions 1996/27 of 19 April 1996[2] and 1998/31 of 17 April 1998[4] and decision 1997/107 of 11 April 1997[3] on the human rights of persons with disabilities,

Deeply alarmed by the number of mines that continue to be laid each year, as well as the presence of a large number of mines and other unexploded devices as a result of armed conflicts, and thus convinced of the necessity and urgency of a significant increase in mine-clearance efforts by the international community with a view to eliminating the threat of landmines to civilians as soon as possible,

Noting the decisions taken at the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects,[5] particularly with respect to Protocol II of the convention and the inclusion in the Amended Protocol[6] of a number of provisions of importance for mine-clearance operations, notably the requirement of detectability,

Noting the entry into force of the Amended Protocol II of the Convention on 3 December 1998,

Recalling that the States parties at the Review Conference declared their commitment to keeping the provisions of Protocol II under review in order to ensure that the concerns regarding the weapons it covers are addressed, and that they would encourage efforts of the United Nations and other organizations to address all the problems of landmines,

Noting that the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction adopted at the Oslo Conference on 18 September 1997 and opened for signature at Ottawa on 3 December 1997, which, among other things, recognizes that States parties in a position to do so should provide assistance for mine-clearance and related activities, for the care and rehabilitation, and social and economic reintegration, of mine victims and for mine-awareness programmes, has been signed by over one hundred and thirty States,

Noting that the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction will enter into force on 1 March 1999,

Encouraged by the initiatives taken at conferences held at Elsinore, Denmark, Bonn, Germany, and Tokyo, notably in relation to international standards and procedures for humanitarian mine-clearance operations, as well as the development of new technology for landmine detection and removal and the rehabilitation of landmine victims, which can serve as a basis on which to advance the safety, effectiveness and professionalism of these operations throughout the world,

Taking note of the Plan of Action on Landmines adopted at the First Continental Conference of African Experts on Landmines, held at Kempton Park, South Africa, and the adoption at Harare by the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity of a

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[1] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1995, Supplement No. 3* and corrigenda (E/1995/23 and Corr.1 and 2), chap. II, sect. A.

[2] Ibid., *1996, Supplement No. 3* and corrigendum (E/1996/23 and Corr.1), chap. II, sect. A.

[3] Ibid., *1997, Supplement No. 3* (E/1997/23), chap. II.

[4] Ibid., *1998, Supplement No. 3* (E/1998/23), chap. II, sect. A.

[5] CCW/CONF.I/16 (Part I).

[6] Ibid., annex B.

resolution on the report of the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity on the issue of anti-personnel mines and international efforts to reach a total ban,[7]

Taking note also of the Agenda for Mine Action developed at the Mine Action Forum at Ottawa in December 1997, and of the outcome of the Workshop on Mine-Action Coordination held at Ottawa in March 1998,

Taking note further of the outcome of the Conference on global Humanitarian Demining held in Washington, D.C., in May 1998,

Noting the international conferences held recently on modern demining technology at Karlsruhe, Germany, and the Joint Research Centre, Ispra, Italy; on landmine injury and rehabilitation at Amman; on the implementation of treaty obligations in the armed forces at Vienna; and other relevant international meetings,

Noting also the International Forum on Demining and Victim Assistance held at Phnom Penh in October 1998, which underlined the importance of ownership by mine-affected countries and their partnership with the international community in conducting mine-action activities in a suitable way towards the "zero victim goal",

Emphasizing the importance of recording the location of mines, of retaining all such records and making them available to concerned parties upon cessation of hostilities, and welcoming the strengthening of the relevant provisions in international law,

Stressing the need to convince mine-affected countries to halt new deployments of anti-personnel mines to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of mine-clearance operations,

Recognizing the important role that the international community, particularly States involved in the deployment of mines, can play in assisting mine clearance in mine-affected countries through the provision of necessary maps and information and appropriate technical and material assistance to remove or otherwise render ineffective existing minefields, mines and booby-traps,

Bearing in mind the serious threat that mines and other unexploded devices post to the safety, health and lives of personnel participating in humanitarian, peacekeeping and rehabilitation programmes and operations,

Aware that the rate of mine clearance needs to accelerate substantially if the global landmine problem is to be tackled effectively,

Concerned about the limited availability of safe and cost-effective mine-detection and mine-clearance equipment as well as the need for effective global coordination in research and development to improve the relevant technology, and conscious of the need to promote further and more rapid progress in this field and to foster international technical cooperation to this end,

Recognizing that, in addition to the primary role of States, the United Nations has an important role in the field of assistance in mine action,

Noting with satisfaction the inclusion in the mandates of several peacekeeping operations of provisions relating to mine-clearance work carried out under the direction of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the Secretariat in the context of such operations,

Commending the activities already undertaken by the United Nations system, donor and recipient Governments, the International Committee of the Red Cross and non-

[7] See A/52/465, annex I.

governmental organizations to coordinate their efforts and seek solutions to the problems related to the presence of mines and other unexploded devices, as well as their assistance to mine victims,

Also commending the role of the Secretary-General in increasing public awareness of the problem of landmines, and in the establishment of the central landmine database and inventories of mine-awareness materials and mine-clearance techniques,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General concerning the activities of the United Nations in assistance in mine clearance;[8]

2. *Welcomes*, in particular, the efforts made by the United Nations to foster the establishment of mine-clearance capacities in countries where mines constitute a serious threat to the safety, health and lives of the local population, and, emphasizing the importance of developing national mine-clearance capacities, urges all Member States and regional organizations, particularly those that have a capacity to do so, to assist mine-affected countries in the establishment of development of their national mine-clearance capacities;

3. *Invites* Member States to develop national programmes, in cooperation with regional organizations and the relevant bodies of the United Nations system where appropriate, to promote awareness of landmines, especially among children;

4. *Expresses its appreciation* to Governments and regional organizations for their financial contributions to the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance and other demining programmes, and appeals to them to continue this support through further contributions;

5. *Encourages* all relevant multilateral and national programmes and bodies to include, in coordination with the United Nations, activities related to mine action in their humanitarian, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development assistance activities, where appropriate, bearing in mind the need to ensure national ownership, sustainability and capacity-building;

6. *Stresses* the importance of international support for emergency assistance to mine victims and the care and rehabilitation, and social and economic reintegration, of mine victims;

7. *Emphasizes again* the important role of the United Nations in the effective coordination of mine-action activities, including those by regional organizations, and welcomes in this regard the policy on mine action and effective coordination developed by the Secretary-General in annex II to his report,[8] which encapsulates the key principles on which United Nations mine action is based and clarifies roles and responsibilities within the United Nations system;

8. *Encourages* the Secretary-General to develop further a comprehensive mine-action strategy, taking into consideration the impact of the landmine problem on rehabilitation, reconstruction and development, with a view to ensuring the effectiveness of assistance in mine action by the United Nations, and emphasizes in this respect the importance of further multisectoral assessments and surveys;

9. *Welcomes* the creation of the United Nations Mine Action Service within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, its designation as the focal point for mine action within the United Nations system, and its ongoing collaboration with and coordination of all mine-related activities of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes;

[8] A/53/496.

10. *Urges* Member States, regional organizations, governmental and non-governmental organizations and foundations to continue to extend full assistance and cooperation to the Secretary-General and, in particular, to provide him with information and data as well as other appropriate resources that could be useful in strengthening the coordination role of the United Nations in mine action, particularly in mine awareness, training, surveying, mine detection and clearance, scientific research on mine-detection and mine-clearance technology, and assistance to victims, including information on and distribution of medical equipment and supplies;

11. *Calls upon* Member States, especially those that have a capacity to do so, to provide the necessary information and technical and material assistance, as appropriate, and to locate, remove, destroy or otherwise render ineffective minefields, mines, booby-traps and other devices in accordance with international law, as soon as possible;

12. *Urges* Member States and regional intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and foundations that have the ability to do so to provide, as appropriate, technological assistance to mine-infested countries and to promote scientific research and development on humanitarian mine-clearance techniques and technology so that mine-clearance activities may be carried out more effectively at lower cost and through safer means and to promote international collaboration in this regard;

13. *Encourages* Member States and regional, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and foundations to continue to support ongoing activities to promote appropriate technology, as well as international operational and safety standards for humanitarian mine-clearance activities, including the early follow-up of the International Conference on Mine Clearance Technology;[9]

14. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session a report on the progress achieved on all relevant issues outlined both in his previous reports to the Assembly on assistance in mine clearance and in the present resolution, and on the operation of the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance and other demining programmes;

15. *Suggests* in this regard that the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance be renamed Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action;

16. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-fourth session the item entitled "Assistance in mine action".

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[9] See A/51/472, annex.